

Dear Reps. Williams and Smith, Sens. Lopes and Anwar, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Erik Kuranko. I am a resident of Bridgeport, and a member of the Connecticut Tenants Union. I am testifying in support of **S.B. 293** (An Act Concerning a Study of Rent Stabilization) and **S.B. 300** (An Act Concerning a Study of Excessive Rent Increases) **with amendments to take immediate action to address unfair rent increases by (1) requiring Fair Rent Commissions, (2) expanding Just Cause eviction protections, and (3) defining fair and equitable rent increases.**

Connecticut needs to address rent increases now and can't wait for a study to be completed. In canvassing and speaking to tenants across Bridgeport, I have repeatedly heard tenants say that their rent was increased despite terrible conditions in their building that have not been fixed by their landlords. Time and time again I have heard tenants describe increases in rent while the landlord reduces their obligation to the renters. I've heard this regardless of the current or past conditions of a unit. One tenant of a high-rise in Bridgeport told me when she moved into her apartment over a decade ago that "it was like a 5 star hotel." Since then the rent has been raised repeatedly and services provided by the landlord disappeared. What stood out to me most was how there used to be a security guard for the building who would walk the tenants from their car to their apartment at night. In the years since the landlord stopped paying for the security, tenants have been assaulted in the parking lot and have had their cars broken into or had parts taken from them like catalytic converters. A tenant of the building put up a security camera to watch their car and had their landlord try and get them to remove it. The landlord made their living situation more dangerous and actively attempted to prevent tenants from making themselves safer. There was at least one instance where a tenant was forced to let their assailant into their apartment and then was beaten horribly and their apartment ransacked. The landlord of that building has been allowed to take more and more money from these people while making their homes unsafe. I understand that most of our state legislators are landlords and that they feel that it is important for landlords to make money from their investment. What I don't understand is why their return on investment is allowed to be made at the expense of tenants. Sen. Simpson said that his goal as a landlord is to provide safety for his tenants but I have seen too many times landlords make their tenants more unsafe in order to make more money. Landlords care about their investment first no matter how much they talk about safety or wanting to provide housing. Too many people in Bridgeport and CT are worried about being able to afford a place to live. If landlords want to take money for providing housing then it is only fair that they make that money after they provide safe and adequate housing to their tenants. We need these laws passed and we NEED rent control in CT. If working people cannot afford to live in CT then CT will not work.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Erik Kuranko, Bridgeport